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Long-time State Apiarist Set to Retire

Charleston W.Va. -- Long-time West Virginia State Apiarist Wade Stiltner is set to retire after an 18-year career at the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA). The state apiarist is responsible for the inspection and well-being of West Virginia bee hives and honey production. Friday, May 31st will be Stiltner's last day.

"Wade has done a tremendous job as the state's lead apiarist over the last 5 years. His impact goes beyond the honey industry as he helped numerous hobbyist beekeepers in the state," said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. "He leaves big shoes to fill."

Wade Stiltner has had a passion for bees nearly all his life. He's a Wayne County native and grew up on a small, rural farm. Stiltner joined FFA when he was a freshman at Buffalo High School. His first FFA project was maintaining 3 bee hives. After graduating high school in 1971, Stiltner went to work for a lumber company and eventually as a coal miner – all the while, growing his apiary operation.

In 2001, after being laid off from the mines, Stiltner saw an ad in the Market Bulletin that the WVDA was looking for apiary inspectors. He joined the WVDA part time that year and in 2006 was promoted to full time. In 2014, Stiltner was named State Apiarist. Since then, he has traveled the state inspecting thousands of hives each year. In his free time, Stiltner keeps more than 200 colonies of bees in his backyard.

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“Wade has been an asset to the Department and we will miss having him around. We appreciated his straight forward approach and the professional expertise he brought to the job,” said WVDA Chief of Staff Norman Bailey. “We hope he will continue to be a part of the agriculture community as he enters this new phase of his life.”

Stiltner is a founding member of the WV Queen Producers Association, a member of the WV Beekeepers Association and a member of various local bee organizations in WV and KY.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works.

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